THE LEGEND OF ONIKIRIMARU

CHAPTER 6: THE MUSASHIBOU BENKEI CHAPTER

KEI KUSUNOKI

...SOMETIMES TAKE HUMAN FORM AND DECEIVE THEM, OR SOMETIMES CURSE AND DEVOUR THEM.
DEMONS AND MONSTERS WILL SOMETIMES POSSESS MEN...
AND, VERY RARELY, THEY WILL LOVE THEM.
YAH!
WHAP
HEY!
WHAP
KAOU YEAR 0 (1169) KURAMA TEMPLE.
WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
SHANAOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

ばさ FLAP FLAP ばさ
THIS IS ONE OF THOSE RARE MEN WHO WAS DEEPLY LOVED BY SOMETHING INHUMAN...
A TENGU WAS TEACHING ME HOW TO FIGHT.
THE 9TH SON OF MINAMOTO NO YOSHITOMO, USHI-WAKAMARU. LATER HE WOULD BE KNOWN AS MINA-MOTO NO ROUHOU-GAN YOSHITSUNE.
USHIWAKAMARU AGE 11

2ND YEAR OF ANGEN (1176) GREAT GOJOU BRIDGE IN KYOTO.
I'M TOLD THERE IS A DEMON WHO ATTACKS THE PEOPLE OF KYOTO WITH HIS NAGINATA.
BUT, IS THERE ANY WAY...
...FOR ME TO CONVINCE THAT STRONG DEMON TO JOIN THE GENJI?
HUFF
HUFF

IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE, THROW DOWN YOUR KATANA.
I AM MUSASHIBOU BENKEI. I MADE A WISH PROMISING THAT IF I STOLE A THOUSAND KATANA I COULD BECOME A DEMON
I SEE YOU'RE ALMOST A DEMON ALREADY.
BENKEI... NO, ONIWAKA!
ひぃ!

I'M TOLD YOU SPENT 18 MONTHS IN YOUR MOTHER'S WOMB, AND WERE BORN A MISSHAPEN CHILD WITH A DEMON'S FANGS. YOUR FATHER NEARLY KILLED YOU.
IT'S SAD, BUT ONLY NATURAL, THAT YOU WOULD BECOME A DEMON.

IF YOU'RE A DEMON, I WILL SIMPLY SLAY YOU WITH ONIKIRI-MARU.

WHO ARE YOU?
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE PRACTICALLY A DEMON, YOU STILL DON'T KNOW?

ROAR!
ONIKIRIMARU IS THE DEMON'S MORTAL ENEMY
THOOM
A DEMON'S CORPSE DOES NOT REMAIN ON THE MORTAL PLANE.
VANISH INTO DUST!

CLASH

WHAT?

WHO ARE YOU?
THE WAY YOU HOLD YOUR SWORD--YOU LEARNED TO FIGHT FROM A TENGU, DIDN'T YOU?

MY NAME IS MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE!
WOULD YOU ENTRUST HIS LIFE TO ME?
WHO ARE YOU, YOU LITTLE BRAT?
WHAT? HE IS A DEMON! WHY WOULD YOU SPARE HIS LIFE?
HE WILL SOMEDAY TAKE THE LIVES OF OTHERS!

YOUR ROAR SEEMED TO ME LIKE ONE OF LAMENTATION.
IF YOU SWEAR TO ONLY TAKE THE LIVES OF THE HATED HEIKE, YOU MAY BECOME MY COMRADE.
WOULD YOU HELP ME DEFEAT THE HEIKE?
...
GROWL
ぐぅぅぅ

STOP IT! THERE'S NO WAY A DEMON WILL OBEY A HUMAN!
IMPOSSIBLE...!
I WOULD BE HONORED.
I SEE. I AM HAPPY TO HEAR THAT.
WHAT IF IT CONSUMES YOU?
YOSHI-TSUNE. IF YOU LET A DEMON STAY BY YOUR SIDE, ONLY RUIN AWAITS YOU.

BUT I WILL BELIEVE!
I WILL BELIEVE THAT THIS DEMON WILL BE A POWERFUL ALLY AGAINST THE HEIKE!
THEN I WILL ACCEPT THAT AS HEAVEN'S FATE FOR ME!
WHAT A FOOL!
MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE... A HUMAN WHO BELIEVES IN A DEMON?

MEN OF THIS ERA KILL EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME, ANYWAY...
SIGN: IN THE 4TH YEAR OF THE JISHOU ERA (1180), THE HEIKE SEND OUT A FORCE TO PURSUE THE GENJI. MINAMOTO ASON YORITOMO, WHO HAS SPENT 20 YEARS AS A MASTERLESS SAMURAI, GATHERS A FORCE TO REPEL THEM.
NOW I MUST GO TO MY BROTHER!
NOW!
MY NAME AS A CHILD WAS USHIWAKA-MARU. I AM THE YOUNGER BROTHER OF MINAMOTO NO YORITOMO!
I HAVE HEARD THAT MY BROTHER RAISES AN ARMY, AND HAVE COME FROM OUSHUU! I REQUEST AN AUDIENCE!
MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE AGE 22

AH! USHI-WAKAMARU! WELCOME, MY YOUNGER BROTHER!
MINAMOTO NO YORITOMO AGE 33
AFTER MANY A STRANGE ENCOUNTER, THE SONS OF MINAMOTO NO YOSHI-TOMO ARE REUNITED. YOSHITSUNE'S ADVANCE BEGINS HERE!
GRAAAH!

JISHOU YEAR 8 (1184)
JANUARY – KISO YOSHINAKA IS DEFEATED.
FEBRUARY – THE HEIKE ARE DEFEATED AT ICHINOTANI.
AUGUST – THE 3RD HEIKE REBELLION IS PUT DOWN.
GENRYOKU YEAR 2 (1185)
MARCH – THE HEIKE ARE SLAUGHTERED AT DANNOURA
FROM THE DAY HE JOINED HIS BROTHER, YOSHITSUNE EMPLOYED HIS TACTICAL GENIUS TO VANQUISH THE HEIKE.

KAMAKURA –
OOKURA-
GOSHO
HFF
HFF
HFF
MY YOUNGER BROTHER HAS DONE SPLENDIDLY!
I WILL PROTECT YOSHITSUNE NO MATTER WHAT!

THE WAY YOSHI-TSUNE FIGHTS IS NOT THE WAY A HUMAN FIGHTS.
BUT LORD YORI-TOMO...
WHAT?
HIS SNEAK ATTACK AT AT ICHI-NOTANI...
THE ENEMY LIES AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS STEEP CLIFF! WE'LL CHARGE DOWN IT WITH OUR HORSES!

LORD YOSHI-TSUNE, GET ON MY BACK, AND TAKE THE LEAD!
WHAT?
CHARGE! FOLLOW YOSHI-TSUNE!

NO HUMAN COULD HAVE DONE THAT.
AND HIS FOLLOWER, MUSA-SHIBOU BENKEI.
SOMETIMES HE DEFE-ATED HIS FOES WITH HIS BARE HANDS.
BUT BENKEI IS ABSOLUTELY LOYAL TO YOSHITSUNE!
INDEED, HE MUST BE...
INDEED! SO LORD YOSHI-TSUNE, WHO HAS SUCH A SERVANT, MAY BE INHUMAN AS WELL...
INHUMAN!
YOSHI-TSUNE AS WELL?

IF AN INHUMAN CREATURE LOVES HIM, HE MUST BE INHUMAN TOO.
YOSHI-TSUNE... NOT HUMAN?

DANCER –
SHIZUKA GOZEN
LORD YOSHITSUNE FOUGHT LIKE AN IMMORTAL! HE MUST NOT BE HUMAN!
HE MUST BE A DEMON!

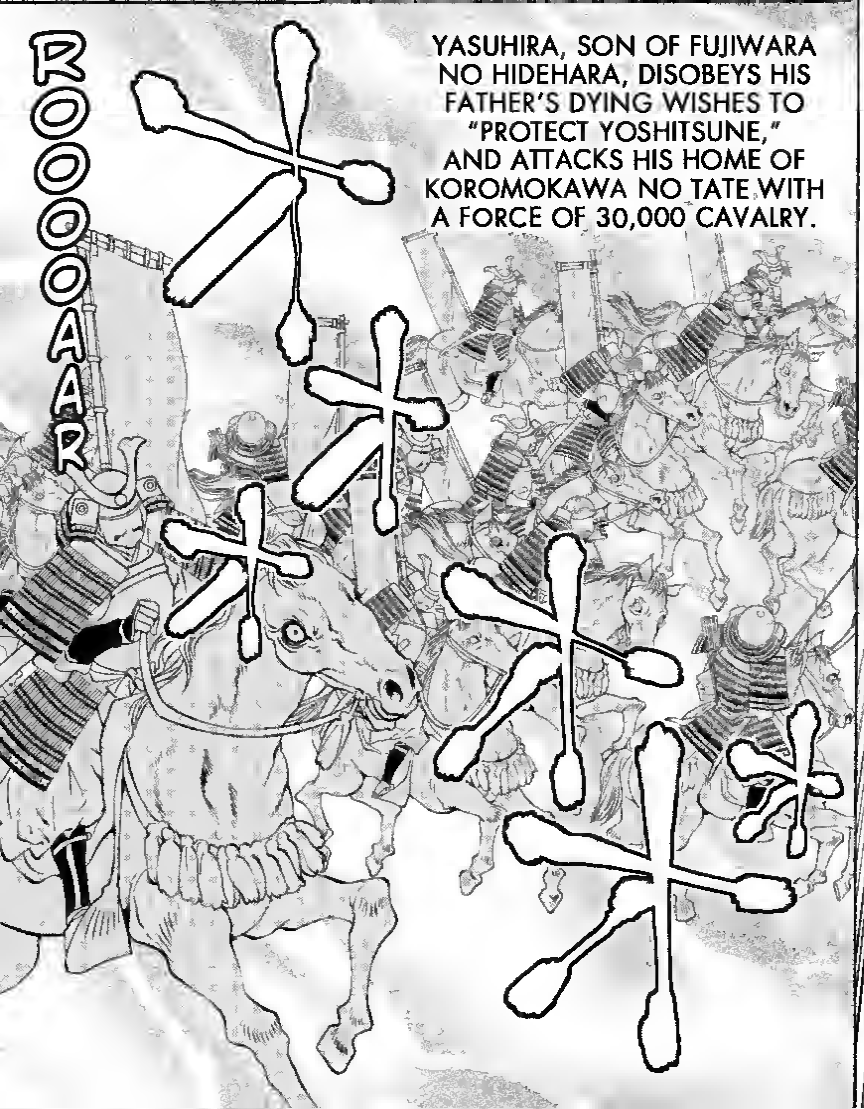
AT THIS RATE, HE MAY TRY TO SLAY YORITOMO AT ANY TIME!
I SEE. SO YOSHI-TSUNE IS A DEMON...
YOSHI-TSUNE IS A DEMON.
HE MUST BE VERY STRONG.
BECAUSE HE IS A DEMON.
YOSHITSUNE RETURNS VICTORIOUS FROM BATTLE BUT IS NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER KAMAKURA.
AND AN ASSASSIN IS DIS-PATCHED TO SLAY HIM.
SDLRRT!

IT WAS AS I SAID!
WE BOTH WORKED AS BROTHERS TO RESTORE THE GENJI!
SO THIS IS THE ANSWER TO MY LETTER TO HIM?
YOU MUST NOT TRUST LORD YORITOMO.
AS LONG AS YOU HAVE BENKEI, YOU ARE INVINCIBLE.

SOON YOSHITSUNE FINDS HIMSELF PURSUED.
SHWAAAA
LORD YOSHI-TSUNE, NO MATTER HOW MANY HUMANS BETRAY YOU, BENKEI AND I ARE YOUR FRIENDS.
YOSHITSUNE ATTEMPTS TO RAISE AN ARMY AGAINST YORITOMO, BUT BARELY ANYONE JOINS HIM. AND TO MAKE THINGS WORSE, FORMER EMPEROR GOSHIRAKAWA DECLARES THAT HE MUST BE SLAIN.
SHIZUKA!
THEY'RE AFTER US! RUN, LORD YOSHI-TSUNE!

I AM PREGNANT WITH YOUR CHILD...
PLEASE SURVIVE!
THERE SHE IS!
FLASH
SHIZUKA?!
MAGIC? ARE YOU INHUMAN TOO?

SHIZUKA IS CAPTURED BY YORITOMO. SHE GIVES BIRTH TO A CHILD WHO IS DROWNED AT YUIGAHAMA.
BUT FOR LORD YOSHITSUNE I WILL BECOME STRONG!
NO ONE EVER SEES HER AFTER THAT.
I AM THE SPIRIT OF A CHERRY TREE. I HAVE ONLY A SMALL AMOUNT OF POWER, WHICH ALLOWS ME TO CONTROL NATURE.



YASUHIRA, SON OF FUJIWARA NO HIDEHARA, DISOBEYS HIS FATHER'S DYING WISHES TO "PROTECT YOSHITSUNE," AND ATTACKS HIS HOME OF KOROMOKAWA NO TATE WITH A FORCE OF 30,000 CAVALRY.

AND IN THE 5TH YEAR OF BUNJI (1189), YOSHITSUNE HAS FLED TO OUSHUU, FROM WHENCE HE HAS NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN.

IS THIS THE END?
I SHALL COMMIT SEPPUKU HERE IN JIDOU-BUTSU.
NO, LORD YOSHITSUNE. I WILL PROTECT YOU.
KRICK
BEHOLD THE TRUE NATURE OF BENKEI, WHICH I HAVE HIDDEN FROM YOU UNTIL NOW!
BENKEI!
KRAK
KRAK

GROOAAH!

TEAR!!
RIP!
SMASH!
THIS IS NO BATTLE.
IT'S A DEMON'S MASSACRE!

?!
SPURT
SLIT
YOU'RE NO LONGER SANE, ARE YOU, BENKEI? NO, DEMON...
NOW THAT YOU HAVE AWOKEN TO YOUR DEMONIC NATURE, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF THE DEMONS, ONIKIRIMARU, WILL SLAY YOU!

SWIP

?!

SLICE

THMP

I'VE CUT HIM MANY TIMES.
WHY?
WHY DOES HIS BODY NOT TURN TO DUST?
おおおお
ROAR

ONIKIRIMARU IS THE DEMON'S MORTAL ENEMY?
...

FOR LORD YOSHITSUNE'S SAKE, I WILL BECOME AN INVINCIBLE DEMON!
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! DEMONS HAVE NO MORTAL ENEMIES!

I SHOULD HAVE KILLED HIM AT GREAT GOJOU BRIDGE!
IT'S HIS DEVOTION TO HIS LORD?
IF YOSHITSUNE ASKED HIM TO, HE COULD DESTROY JAPAN!

ENOUGH, BENKEI!
FLINCH
LORD YOSHI-TSUNE...
B-BUT LORD YOSHI-TSUNE...
I MUST PROTECT YOU!
ENOUGH. WILL YOU PROTECT THE PLACE WHERE I COMMIT SUICIDE, SO THAT NONE MAY INTERVENE?
THE BATTLE IS OVER.
YOU SWORE YOU WOULD KILL ONLY THE HEIKE, RIGHT?

IS IT YOSHITSUNE'S SELFLESS PERSONALITY THAT MAKES THE INHUMAN ADORE HIM SO?
AS YOU WISH.
SLAM
WE WILL MEET AGAIN IN EACH OF OUR NEXT LIVES, EVEN ABOVE THE PURPLE CLOUDS.
WAIT FOR ME ON THE PATH TO THE NEXT LIFE, MY LORD.

FIRE YOUR ARROWS! FIRE YOUR ARROWS AT THAT DEMON!
NONE SHALL PASS!
THP
THP
THP
GRR...
THP
THP
THP

IS IT BECAUSE IF HE DISAPPEARS NOW HE WILL BE UNABLE TO PROTECT YOSHITSUNE AS HE DIES?
IMPOSSIBLE! A DEMON'S BODY CANNOT REMAIN IN THIS WORLD AFTER ITS DEATH!
DO YOU LOVE YOSHITSUNE SO MUCH THAT YOU WILL CHANGE THE LAWS WHICH BIND YOU, DEMON?
HE'S... ALREADY DEAD!

MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE, LOVED BY MONSTERS, SPIRITS, AND IN THE END, EVEN DEMONS.
NO, MUSASHIBOU BENKEI!
RARELY IN THIS WORLD DO SUCH PEOPLE EXIST.

...SOMETIMES TAKE HUMAN FORM AND DECEIVE THEM...
...OR SOMETIMES CURSE AND DEVOUR THEM.
HOW DARE YOU SLAY LORD YOSHI-TSUNE.
BUT STILL THEY WILL POSSESS MEN...
CURSE YOU...
CURSE YOU, MINAMOTO NO YORITOMO!
I AM A POWERLESS SPIRIT, BUT I WILL CURSE YOU AND SLAY YOU NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES!
MINAMOTO NO YORITOMO ASCENDED TO THE POSITION OF SHOGUN, AND ESTABLISHED THE FIRST SHOGUNATE. BUT IN KENKYUU 10 (1199), HE FELL FROM HIS HORSE AND DIED.
THERE WAS NEVER ANY PROOF...
...THAT IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.